

ASSEMBLIES or conglomerations of authors tend to end in trouble; but I am assured that for this year's P.E.N. Club Congress, which is set in London and opens next Sunday evening, the auguries are all of the best and most tranquil.

The P.E.N. Club is a world association of published authors; and authors, contrary to current rumour, are not, as a class, very rich. It was, therefore, a considerable strain upon the resources of the English centre when the original figure of 500 guests was found to have grown, as if overnight, to 750. Official hospitality (in contrast to the example set in recent years by Italy, Holland, and Austria) was disappointingly thin; and it is due to the generosity of publishers and



BERTOLT BRECHT

newspaper-owners that England will, after all, make a passable show.

Writers and the Public

The theme of this year's congress is "The Author and the Public"; and among the delegates from abroad are several writers well able to hold forth in the matter. M. André Maurois, who no doubt thinks better of England today than he did in 1940, has come from France. Signor Carlo Levi, whose "Christ Stopped at Eboli" remains one of the best novels of the immediate post-war period, has come from

Italy, as have Princess Caenani, the animatrix of "Botticelle Oscure," Ignazio Silone, the author of "Bread and Wine," and Professor Mario Praz, whose knowledge of the Victorian novel must rival Mr. Michael Sadleir's. But perhaps it is Germany which will provide the congress's prime curiosity: Bertolt Brecht, whose plays are more discussed, in this country, than acted, and whose public utterances invariably create a stir.

The Re-emergent General

THE vicissitudes of French parliamentary government have tended during the last few weeks to bring forward from the shadows the sombre and compelling figure of General de Gaulle.

Not long ago it was rumoured that the General was considering whether or not to end his career in a monastery; but I hear from friends in Paris that with the publication of Volume Two of his memoirs he has been paying frequent visits to his Paris office in the Rue de Solferino, and that the variety and distinction of his visitors would seem to bear out his reputation as "the best-informed man in France."

Of the large civil and military staff, the guard of honour, and the Sûreté detectives who formerly attended the General, nothing now remains but a black Citroën and two drivers from the Préfecture de Police. Nor is this the only respect in which he has cut down his scale of life. He used to be a heavy smoker, who got through three packets a day of a brand, made for him in London, whose name ("Les Amis des Volontaires Français") echoed the bleak early days of La France Combattante; but now his doctor has forbidden this indulgence, and progress with his memoirs has been correspondingly slower. But a first glance at Volume Two betrays no falline-

PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS

of in the marmoreal distinction of their style.

The Red Dean

TWO years ago I heard the Dean of Canterbury speak at a "Daily Worker" rally. Then he was introduced to a cheering audience as the worthy winner of a Stalin Prize; but in the controversy that now surrounds the name of Stalin he has remained silent.

Last week I heard the Dean, now wearing a gorgeous cope,

speak once again, in Canterbury Cathedral. He began with a passing shot at Manchester businessmen—his father had been a Manchester businessman—and followed this with a passing blow at America—many of his congregation were Americans. He had words of praise for those who speak out against evil "like Montes Felton and Eileen Fletcher."

Was Khrushchev to be praised for speaking out against Stalin? Was Togliatti to be

praised for speaking out against Khrushchev? The Dean did not say. Perhaps he never will.

Crime and Ivory

WITH so many urgent problems on their plate it is hardly surprising that Colonial Office officials devote their time to the curbing of wild men rather than the protection of wild animals. Even so I am sorry that Mr. John Hare, the Minister of State, was not more positive last week when answer-

ing a parliamentary question about ivory poaching in East Africa.

The situation there is desperate. Last year 600 elephants were killed by poachers in the province of Kenya alone; and I am told that the ivory smuggling trade, which is based on the romantic island of Zanzibar, has now reached an unprecedented size. With ivory prices edging upwards and human greed keeping pace there is a very real danger that the East African elephant will soon be as rare as the hairy mammoth.

Much might be gained if the Government made the possession of poisoned arrows illegal. These potent weapons are most favoured by poachers and their elimination would be welcome on many grounds. Elephants are the target tonight. Policemen may be the target tomorrow.

Indian Summer

COLONEL A.D.C. MACAULAY, the Secretary of the All-England Lawn Tennis Club, served with the Indian Army for a number of years and now it looks as though India will emerge as a tennis power of the front rank before the Macaulay era closes at Wimbledon.

The first great upset of this year's championships was scored by Krishnan Ramana-athan, a burly young economics student from Madras who has been coached by Hans Nusslein, the German professional. The coming crop of young Indian players looks promising.

Since the war Asian players have made a negligible contribution to the game. Folk Ampon of the Philippines has been the only male player to win any wide following, but a Japanese pair did win the American doubles championship last year after torn muscles, torrential rain, and conflicting Davis Cup commitments had decimated the opposition.

Now the time is ripe for a change. Pakistan dominates the realm of squash, Japanese table tennis players are the best in the world. The Malays excel at badminton. Asia, it seems, has crossed the baseline.

A Delicate Attention

NEXT Wednesday's ceremonial opening by the Queen of the rehousing National Library of Scotland is an event of which more might have been made, south of the Border.

In the United States, on the other hand, excitement has reached steam-head in bibliographical circles; and among those who are making the

journey to Edinburgh are that prince of bibliographers Mr. William A. Jackson, Mr. Philip Hofer of the Department of Graphic Arts at Harvard, and Mr. Donald Hyde, the Yale bookman who is now recovering from his activities as defence counsel in the recent Lewis & Clark lawsuit.

The British Museum Library is now so notably under-housed that its guardians must look with envy at the handsome new Scottish building and its exemplary equipment. But for Dr. C. B. Oldman, Principal Keeper of Printed Books at the B.M., Edinburgh University has prepared the most delicate of consultations: an honorary Doctorate of Music. This falls most happily in the bi-centenary year of Mozart, on whom Dr. Oldman has for many years been an authority of international standing.

Whistler Pinxit . . .

PROUST the draughtsman is not much known in this country, and even last year's



PROUSTIAN VARIANT

elaborate Proust exhibition had only one small caricature from his hand.

A particular interest attaches, therefore, to his letters to Reynaldo Hahn, which have just been published in France, together with facsimiles of the sketches which ornament them. These reveal Proust as a draughtsman who could rough in a group of statues or a piece of stained glass from Chartres or Le Mans as nimbly as a professional. Parodies of Manet, Whistler, Forain and Caran d'Ache came easily to him; and he could add, when he chose, an element of pure absurdity which, even after fifty years, retains its original freshness. As a specimen I append here the drawing (an idiosyncratic version of Whistler's portrait of Carlyle) which takes most kindly to newsprint.

Empires and Pains

LAST week Sir Winston Churchill's "The Birth of Britain" was top of the list of best-selling non-fiction books in America. Second place was won by Dr. Alexander's "Arthritis and Common Sense."